

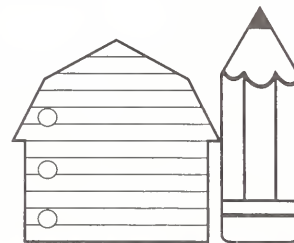
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Ag in the Classroom

Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact: Shirley Traxler, Director, Room 317-A, Administration Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-2200. 202/720-5727

MARCH/APRIL 93
Vol. 9, No. 2

Mike Espy Sworn In as Secretary of Agriculture

The 25th Secretary of Agriculture combines legislative experience with a strong commitment to the unique concerns of rural America. Mike Espy, who formerly represented Mississippi's second district in the U.S. House of Representatives, was named by President Clinton to head one of the largest and most diverse agencies in the U.S. government.

Espy was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1986, where he served on the Agriculture and Budget Committees. He was chairman of the Domestic Hunger Task Force of the Select Committee on Hunger, the Lower Mississippi Delta Caucus, and the Natural Resources, Community, and Economic Development Task Force on the House Budget Committee. He was also Majority Whip at large.

Espy has combined his concerns for rural America with a commitment to reinvent government. In his years on the House Agriculture Committee, he made numerous proposals to reform agriculture, including measures to cut red tape in the USDA National Appeals Division, to promote the use of food stamps at farmers' markets, to provide outreach programs for limited resource farmers, and to increase markets for pond-raised catfish. As Secretary of Agriculture, Espy is expected to be a strong advocate of agricultural literacy and of Ag in the Classroom.

Before his election to Congress, Espy served as Mississippi assistant state attorney general for consumer protection, assistant secretary of the public lands division, and assistant secretary of state for legal services. He received a bachelor's degree from Howard University and a law degree from Santa Clara Law School.



As Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy administers programs that maintain America's safe, abundant, and reasonably priced supply of food and fiber while protecting and preserving the nation's soil and water resources.

Editors's Note

The National Ag in the Classroom Conference agenda and registration information are included in this newsletter. The conference is in Washington, D.C. at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza on June 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1993. Please register and make your hotel reservations as soon as possible.

I encourage you to come to the conference on Saturday and set up your exhibits—they are an important part of our conference. Through them we learn about new materials, posters, video tapes, agricultural magazines, and other innovative strategies to reach teachers and students.

Note that the Regions will be meeting on Sunday at 4:15 p.m. If you are not certain to which region you belong, call or write to me or get in touch with your State Contact whose name and address are listed on the back of this newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you in June.



Materials Help Students Learn About and Become Caretakers

One of the key principles of environmental education is to teach students the importance of being good caretakers of our natural resources. And who better exemplifies good stewardship of animals, plants, soil, and water than today's farmers and ranchers?

That's the premise of "Caretakers All," a new curriculum resource kit developed by the National Live Stock and Meat Board. Aimed at third and fourth graders, the six lessons introduce students to important concepts in environmental education by studying how farmers and ranchers care for natural resources.

Each lesson uses a study print, both to prompt student discussion and to illustrate the principles of caretaking. For example, one print shows a rancher feeding cattle during a winter storm.

Students learn how farmers and ranchers care for animals (by providing food, water, medical care, and protection, for example). They also learn how the rancher depends on the cattle—producing and selling healthy livestock provides money to take care of his family.

Reproducible student masters provide hands-on activities that further stimulate student learning. Whether it's going on a scavenger hunt to find products that come from cows or analyzing the causes and effects of the Dust Bowl, students learn more about the importance of taking care of the environment.

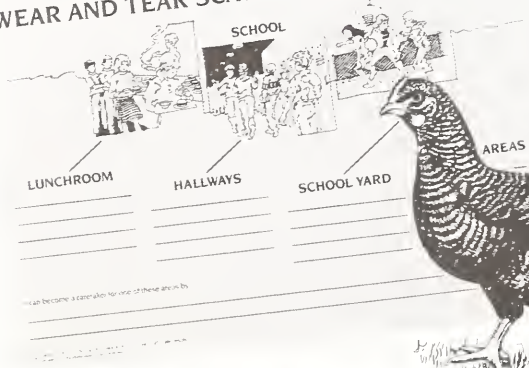
The teaching package also includes suggestions on how to extend the activities into other curriculum areas. For example, students can create a graph to chart the responsibilities students already have in their homes. To incorporate art, students can create a logo that emphasizes the importance of being a good caretaker.

Third and fourth grade teachers can receive the kits for free by writing on school stationery and outlining at least three ways they plan to use the materials with their students. Contact Caretakers All, Dept. E/CA07, 444 N. Michigan Ave., 18th Floor, Chicago, IL 60611-9909. Others can order the kit for \$8.95 plus shipping and handling. Call 1-800-368-3138.

Webs, Venn diagrams, and scavenger hunts are among the activities students use in learning how to be "Caretakers All."

CARETAKERS All ACTIVITY SHEET 4A

WEAR AND TEAR SCAVENGER HUNT



CARETAKERS All ACTIVITY SHEET 2B

THE WATER CYCLE

WORD BANK

EVAPORATION

When water changes from liquid to gas.

CONDENSATION

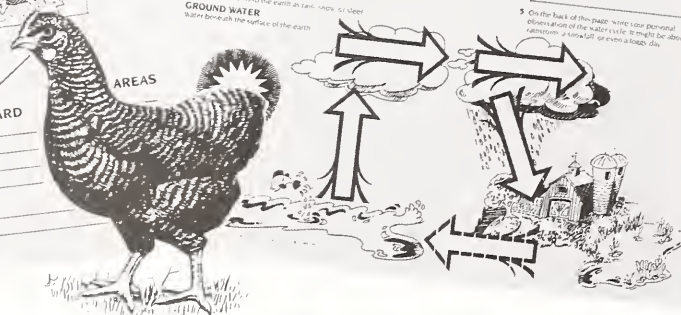
When gas changes back to liquid.

PRECIPITATION

When water returns to the earth as rain, snow, or sleet.

GROUND WATER

Water beneath the surface of the earth.





Mississippi Teacher Creates Outdoor Classroom

What was once a neglected courtyard in the center of a Mississippi elementary school has now become an outdoor classroom that is a source of inspiration, pride, and expanded educational opportunities for children. The outdoor classroom project at Mendenhall (MS) Elementary School was spearheaded by second grade teacher Doris Broadus, whose enthusiastic leadership earned her recognition as the Simpson County Teacher of the Year.

"I had taught in a room that looked out over that courtyard for 16 years," Broadus says. "Every year, when it came time to study Mississippi history, I would look through my window at the large magnolia tree — our state tree — and wish my students could use that courtyard in their studies." Instead, the area continued to be an eyesore.

In the spring of 1990, Broadus approached principal Irene Floyd with her idea of creating a beautiful outdoor learning center. The creation of the classroom became a real community project. The Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners worked to help design the area. Students from the local vocational school helped build a deck. Community members donated money and needed supplies.

When yards of topsoil needed to be moved from the front of the school into the enclosed courtyard, Broadus and Floyd simply declared "Dirt Day." Students from grades K-4 filled gallon buckets with the dirt and transported it through the auditorium and into the courtyard. In all, volunteers contributed more than 1,400 hours to create the classroom.

Today, the classroom is in almost constant use. Broadus explains, "We plant seeds and bulbs. We use the sundial to learn about the sun's rotation. We study directions by using a compass. Since we have bird feeders and a fish pond [actually an old bathtub sunk into one corner of the area], we study the homes of animals. We have a rain gauge and thermometers out there and we collect data."

The classroom is so popular that the school has had to create a schedule so every class gets a chance to share. "The children can't wait for their turn to come," Broadus says.

The large magnolia tree has become a centerpiece of the outdoor classroom. Today, whether students are studying Mississippi history, the life cycle of a frog, or the parts of a seed, they can enjoy the outdoor classroom created because of the inspiration of a very creative second grade teacher.



Helen Broadus and her second graders enjoy studying birds and plants in their natural setting.



“Read to Feed” Program Promotes Learning While Fighting Hunger

Reading is the most basic of basic skills. Students who read regularly do better in school than those who rarely pick up a book. The “Read to Feed” project sponsored by Heifer Project International (HPI) encourages students to read for pleasure . . . and to help feed hungry people around the world.

“Read to Feed” raises money to help HPI provide animals and training to hungry families in the United States and around the world. Children who agree to take part in the Read to Feed program must first have written permission from their parents or guardians. They ask family and friends to sponsor them, pledging a small amount for each book read.

When the children have completed their reading

and collected the money, they can help decide how their money will be spent. For example, they could decide on the type of animal they want to provide to a family, or specify the country they want to receive their assistance.

This active decision making requires research, so the “Read to Feed” program promotes global understanding and the important role of animal agriculture in the world. HPI materials learn how various types of animals, from chicks to water buffalo, can help provide food and income to poor families. As one teacher whose students took part in the program pointed out, “Teachers need to be better able to help their students understand the complexities of hunger in the world.”

Every farm animal given to a poor family carries with it an important obligation: to multiply and pass on. The firstborn offspring of a donated animal must be given to a needy neighbor. Along with donating animals, HPI helps train families in animal husbandry. Dan West, the founder of HPI, says, “Receiving handouts is degrading, but if you pass on what you receive it is ennobling.”

A leader’s packet includes everything needed to start a “Read to Feed” program—leader’s instructions, reproducible information for students and parents on HPI and world hunger, and sample reader’s materials and award certificates. For a copy of the packet, send \$1 to Heifer Project International, 1015 S. Louisiana, PO Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203.



On the slopes of a densely populated mountain in Tanzania, Mrs. Lightness is delighted with her goat, Bahiti, (“Good Luck”). The goat helps her feed her young children.

New Hampshire Teachers Learn About Science and Agriculture

Bring together elementary school teachers, a farm exposition, and the chance to learn hands-on science activities and you have the ingredients for a successful day. The New Hampshire Ag in the Classroom program recently sponsored workshops to make science come alive and to give teachers ideas of ways to integrate new materials into their curriculum.

The workshops were held in conjunction with the New Hampshire Farm and Forest Exposition, a trade show that attracts farmers from across the state. "In the past," says Lynne Blye, state contact for AITC in New Hampshire, "we've sponsored activities to bring students to the Expo. This year, we decided to reach out to teachers in the hopes that we would ultimately reach a larger group of students."

The 18 teachers who signed up for the workshops came from across the state. Participants had the chance to take part in five hands-on science workshops. Each emphasized an aspect of New Hampshire agriculture. Topics included:

- Milk and Microscopes Make Science
- All About Apples

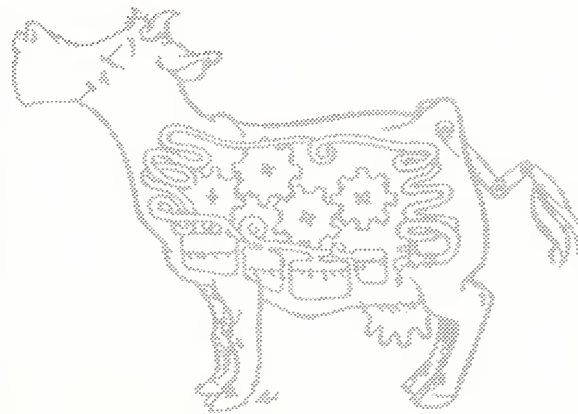
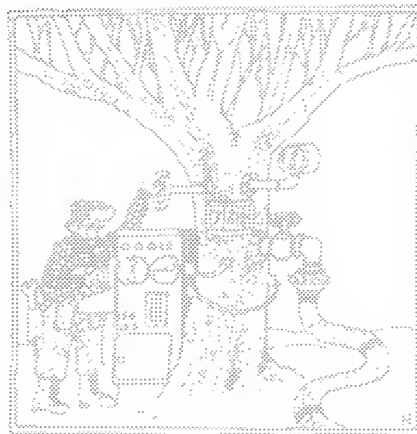
- Sap, Syrup and Science

- Plant an Idea
- Tools Teach.

In each of the 30-minute workshops, teachers completed one activity they could take back to their classrooms. In the dairy workshop, for example, they made fried milk, a Spanish dessert that Blye says "sounds strange, but tastes great." Later, teachers learned how to make invisible ink from milk and how making butter can help students learn how liquids can turn into solids.

In the maple syrup workshop, teachers had the chance to grade syrup based on its color. They also conducted experiments to see how sap moves through a tree. At each of the workshops, teachers received other activity suggestions. "Teachers were thrilled to leave with a host of new and interesting activities," Blye said.

The real key to the day's success, of course, will be what teachers do *after* they leave the workshop. "We're hoping that they will not only use it themselves, but also go back and excite other teachers," Blye says. "I think that will happen."



What Do You Know About Soybeans? Read On . . .

If you think soybeans are only used in making tofu, you probably haven't read a new book, *Why the Brown Bean Was Blue*. This 32-page softcover book was published by the Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness as a way of helping children — and their parents — learn more about this versatile crop.

The two-year-long project was designed to teach children about the important role soybeans play in their everyday lives. Told through simple rhymes and colorful pictures, the book tells the story of three children who find a small brown bean on the ground. The magical bean offers to take them on a trip through the soybean world.

Three students learn more about the amazing soybean in a new book published by the Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness.

First, the children learn how soybeans are grown and processed. When they ask how soybeans are used, they learn about the many products made from soybeans: food for people, livestock, cats, dogs, and fish; soap; varnish; medicines; and printer's ink.

On one page, the children discover:

"From kitchens to the cupboards,
You'll find me everywhere —
Soybean oil is even in your soap,
And shampoo for your hair!"

Naturally, the book was printed with soy ink, on recyclable paper.

The idea of presenting information about agriculture in a literature book, rather than as a stand-alone lesson plan, came from elementary school teachers. Ellen Hellerich, state contact for AITC in Nebraska, notes, "A number of the teachers we consulted told us they are using the 'whole-language' approach to teach reading. In other words, they are using literature to teach science, social studies, and other subjects."

"The approach," she says, "makes sense. In real life, people usually solve problems by bringing in things they know from different subject areas."

Teachers who have used the book in their classroom say they, like the characters in the book, didn't know how important soybeans are in everyday life. "Many of the people who have read the book say they are amazed at all the products that use soybeans," Hellerich says. "So the book helps children and adults realize how our lives depend on agriculture."

Single copies of the book are \$5.00, plus \$1.40 for shipping and handling. Make checks payable to Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness. Write to the Foundation at PO Box 80299, Lincoln, NE 68501.



Connections

1993 National AG in the Classroom Conference

Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza
775 12th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
202/737-02200

Saturday, June 5:

CONFERENCE ROOM

2:00 P.M. Set up exhibits
 Registration
 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Reception and Visit Exhibits
 Teacher Informal Network
 7:00 p.m. State Contacts Meeting

Sunday, June 6:

CONFERENCE ROOM

9:00 - noon Set up Exhibits
 11:00 a.m. Registration
 1:00 - 1:45 p.m. Newcomer's Meeting
 1:45 - 2:00 p.m. State Contacts (continued)
 2:00 - 2:15 p.m. BREAK
 2:15 - 3:00 p.m. Opening Remarks/Instructions
 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Guest Speaker
 4:00 - 4:15 p.m. 2-minute Ideas
 4:15 - 5:15 p.m. BREAK
 4:15 - 5:15 p.m. Regional Meetings
 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Dinner
 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. Media Round Robin

Monday, June 7:

CONFERENCE ROOM

8:00 - 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Changing Times
 9:00 - 9:10 a.m. BREAK
 9:10 - 10:20 a.m. Roundtables
 10:20 - 10:30 a.m. MIT's (Most Important Things)
 10:30 - 10:45 a.m. BREAK and move to Workshops
 10:45 - 11:45 a.m. Workshops
 I. Books
 How to Evaluate Them
 How to Adapt Them to Classroom Use
 II. Cooperative Learning
 III. Summer Workshops for Teachers
 IV. Media Outreach
 V. New Ideas for Fairs/ Exhibits
 VI. World Hunger/Public Policy and how to adapt issues to classroom
 11:45 a.m. - Noon BREAK

Noon - 1:15 p.m.

LUNCH and What to Expect + more 2-minute ideas and Food, Land and People update

1:30 - 5:00 p.m.

Traveling Workshops

5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Reception — Evening Free

Tuesday, June 8:

8:00 - 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. Industry Panel + teachers who use their materials
 9:30 - 9:45 a.m. BREAK
 9:45 - 10:55 a.m. Roundtables
 10:55 - 11:05 a.m. MIT's (Most Important Things)
 11:05 - 11:50 a.m. BREAK and Tear Down Exhibits
 11:50 a.m. LUNCH
 Traveling Workshop
 Teacher Reports
 Conference Recap
 Extravaganza

Clip this form and use it for your National Conference Registration:

Registration

National AG in the Classroom Conference
June 5-8, 1993

Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza
775 12th Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: 202/737-02200 or
1-800-HOLIDAY

NAME: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Important notice: You make your hotel reservations at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza. The rate of \$96 per night (+tax), single or double occupancy, applies three days before and three days after our conference. Be sure to mention Ag in the Classroom when you make your reservations.

Date of your arrival _____

Date of your departure _____

Notice: Ground transportation from National Airport can be by taxi (approx. \$10) or by subway (get off at the Metro Center stop and exit to 12th & G Street).

Registration Fee is \$125.00. Make check payable to Ag in the Classroom and return with this form to:

Shirley Traxler
 Room 317-A, USDA
 Washington, D.C. 20250-2202

If you have any questions, call: 202/720-5727

DISPLAY SPACE is available at no cost. _____ please reserve exhibit space for me.

I will need: _____ table(s); _____ electrical outlet;
 _____ wall space; _____ other;

Please specify: _____

Please Make Your Hotel Reservations By April 15 and Return Your Registrations By April 20, 1993

Ag in the Classroom---State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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Ag in the Classroom Notes

Room 317-A, Administration Bldg.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Washington, D.C. 20250-2200

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RM 111 NAL BLDG BELTSVILLE
USDA DELIVERY STOP 20705

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